

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Monday, July 6, 2020 5:53 PM
To: Linda Lopez
Subject: FW: Schoolyard/Dog "park" Issue

From: Patricia Goodman <trishgoodman@att.net>
Sent: Monday, July 06, 2020 5:42 PM
To: CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>
Subject: Schoolyard/Dog "park" Issue

Dear Town of Ross,

I am writing to voice my support for the temporary banning of dogs from the school-adjacent Common area where outdoor education is being planned by Ross School. I have been a dog-owning Ross resident for over a decade and do not have children attending Ross School. I have taken my dog to the area in question hundreds of times over the years. However, given that Ross has a vast amount of space available for walking dogs, and the critical need Ross children have to get back to some form of in-person schooling, with appropriate social distancing, I think the plan makes sense during this critical time.

One additional suggestion I have is potentially allowing off-leash dogs in the park area between the Post Office parking lot and the tennis courts, for as long as they are banned from the school area. This is very near the Common, there's ample nearby parking, there are benches for the elderly, disabled or anyone else that needs to rest their feet. It is not quite as ideal an area for socializing or for ball throwing as the school-adjacent area, but the small sacrifice of a less perfect location seems to be a very reasonable compromise and little enough for residents to do for our children.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours,
Patricia Goodman
415-497-0689
21 Upper Road West, POB 658

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Tuesday, July 7, 2020 9:34 AM
To: Linda Lopez
Subject: FW: Dogs ... Resolution 2170

-----Original Message-----

From: Barbara Call <barbcall@sbcglobal.net>
Sent: Tuesday, July 07, 2020 9:22 AM
To: Julie McMillan <juliemcmillan@comcast.net>; Elizabeth Robbins <eliz.robbs@comcast.net>; Elizabeth Brekhus <elizabethb@brekhus.com>; Beach Kuhl <beachkuhl35@gmail.com>; Bill Kircher <cwkmisc@gmail.com>
Cc: Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>
Subject: Dogs ... Resolution 2170

Dear Mayor & Council,

I have had dogs all my life from strays to show dogs. My father used to complain that I loved my dogs more than I loved my family. Here is some interesting information for you:

There are 78 million domesticated dogs in the US. All hopefully loved and cared for by their human families. It is rumored that some dogs are treated better than the children. For some owners, dogs are their children. They provide the love that humans want and need. Statistics show they lower blood pressure, decrease heart attacks and reduce depression and anxiety. Even the shelter in place order recognizes dogs as family members and allows for them to be walked outside.

Yet, Ross decided to willy nilly no longer allow them on the public park, Ross Commons, thus dramatically affecting the lives of the dogs and their owners.

And why? WHY?

Because the school superintendent says children are afraid of dogs.

Because the school superintendent says dogs make the Commons dirty.

Because some person says dogs are somehow interfering with social distancing.

In these stressful times when our country is being torn apart and peoples lives are undergoing tremendous changes, we need government to be supportive rather than destructive. It is unbelievable to me that the governing body of this town would be so cruel in their disregard of how they are negatively impacting some citizen's lives by outlawing dogs. Unbelievable to me that they would reduce the function of the valuable police force into the equivalent of hall monitors. There is no evidence that children are trembling in fear and do not want to go to school because of dogs. School isn't even in session and who knows when it will be!

The Commons is not filthy because of dogs. In the 20 years I have lived next door to the Commons, the recreational usage has tripled! If anything makes it unusable, it's the number of sports camps using it, killing the grass, making muddy areas, and leaving all sorts of trash behind; not the few dogs...few dogs...that stay for short periods of time. And the Ross dog owners clean up after their dogs!

If the Town is really worried about social distancing now, they would restrict the number of people coming to the Commons from who knows where. And they would restrict the size of the groups. I have seen groups of 25 people sitting close together on the Commons with none of them wearing masks.

I have small dogs now and walk them around the pathway on a leash. I do not mingle with the large dogs because I don't want a 50 lb. dog trying to play with my 10lb. dog.

Children love my dogs. They are constantly asking if they can pet them. I do not allow it because my dogs are somewhat afraid of the children. Children are too rambunctious and noisy for them.

I do not frequent the dog park area except to get a Baggie or to socialize. But I see the big dogs and watch them play. Big dogs need to run and chase balls and rough house with other dogs.

It's wonderful that Ross has that area for them! It adds to the richness of life in Ross. And it isn't as if the dogs are constantly out there. Maybe 1-1/2 hours a day for play. With an occasional dog walking through that area. I cannot see why you would take that away. I believe the dog park area should stay and some rules could be instituted regarding when dogs can be there and when they need to be on leashes, etc. If children are truly afraid of dogs, then it would be important to educate these kids about dogs and the history of dogs and how important they have been and still are for human beings. Dogs helped men survive; dogs help blind people; dogs are used in search and rescue efforts; dogs help the police; dogs help the disabled; dogs are service animals and emotional support animals. There are many different breeds of dogs, all with interesting origins and functions. It would be fun for children to learn about dogs! Education would go much further in helping frightened children overcome their fears than just playing into their fears. You would think that McDowell would know this. Particularly since he is an educator! Maybe he is afraid of dogs. By the same token, dog owners need to be in control of their dogs and unruly, out of control dogs should not be allowed or should have a restraining device. Some dogs need training!

With regards to an area for social distancing when school opens, I cannot see outside classrooms working. And how is a tent any different from a room for social distancing? I wonder about using the stage and partitioning parts of the gym and the other areas around the school. I would suggest discussing possible solutions inside the school when it is more clear what August or September will bring. Bad weather will prohibit the usefulness of outside classrooms. Better to be prepared for Winter.

I hope the decision you make is a wise one and does not divide the Town and cause anger and more hostile feelings like the current one has caused.

It should be remembered that Ross Commons is a public park and does not belong to the school. Any major changes should be put to a public vote!

I believe things could be worked out with cooperation and communication and consideration.

Cordially,

Barbara Call

Sent from my iPhone

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Tuesday, July 7, 2020 10:02 AM
To: Linda Lopez
Subject: FW: Prohibition of Dogs from Ross Common

From: Jeff Babcock <Jeff.Babcock@Stratmorgroup.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 07, 2020 9:57 AM
To: CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>
Subject: Prohibition of Dogs from Ross Common

To Ross Town Council:

As a Ross resident and taxpayer, I am writing to object to process and outcome of banning dogs from the entire Ross Common boundaries.

As has been expressed by many others, Dr. McDowell's undated letter to the Town Council includes several statements of doubtful validity. To base a controversial new ordinance entirely on the concerns he raises is an extreme response. We Ross residences are entitled to some sort of "due process." Ross Common is a public park and not owned or controlled by Ross School.

Secondly, to implement this prohibition before and without any opportunity for public expression feels like a "railroad job." It seems that you all wanted to avoid the inevitable push back from concerned Ross residents.

I understand that COVID-driven preventative measures require more social distancing. We can certainly accommodate that without a full prohibition of dogs on Ross Common. A requirement for dogs to be on leashes during school hours would be acceptable. There are a handful of compromises which will accomplish Dr. McDowell's education agenda without such extreme measures

Jeff Babcock
Senior Partner



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M 415-902-3086
www.stratmorgroup.com

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Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Tuesday, July 7, 2020 3:57 PM
To: Linda Lopez
Subject: FW: Restriction of dogs from Ross Common

From: Cate Babcock <catebabcock@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 07, 2020 3:51 PM
To: CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>
Subject: Restriction of dogs from Ross Common

“There is nothing so American as our parks. The fundamental idea behind the parks is intrinsic to our needs. It is, in brief, that the country belongs to the people, that it is in process of making for the enrichment of the lives of all of us. The parks stand as the outward symbol of the great human principle.”

I believe FDR's vision was that a park provides nature, enrichment and exercise for not only humans but dogs. Certainly, we're living in a nefarious period caused by COVID. But our adjustments, and thus the function of our Common, should be predicated on ALL of our needs.

It's clear that last month's decision to restrict the Common from dogs was solely for this summer's need by Ross Rec and the possible need in the future by Ross School. But Ross Rec and Ross School do not own the Common. This area is a community-owned site and thus, should be available for all, including dogs.

I present Central Park as a model. Overwhelmed by Manhattan's need to create more beds for COVID, a section of the park was created as a hospital. Note: the entire park was not dog-restricted.

For Ross to only honor Ross Rec's and Ross School's needs is not working in partnership with the public. A more tenable solution would be to allocate time and specific area for each group.

Best regards,
Catherine Babcock

P.S. I hope the Council will acknowledge a salient element: because of lockdown, non-resident families and their unleashed dogs are using the Common on the weekend. It's wonderful that families are availing themselves of our beautiful green but they're leaving garbage and dog excrement.

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Tuesday, July 7, 2020 11:55 AM
To: Linda Lopez
Subject: FW: Complete restriction of dogs from Ross Common

From: GEORGE CONLEY <kailaniconley@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 07, 2020 11:30 AM
To: CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>
Subject: Complete restriction of dogs from Ross Common

Dear Town Council Members and all concerned,

It was with complete disbelief that I heard about the proposal to ban leashed dogs from using the Common at any time, including the perimeter sidewalk! It is said the reasoning for this is partly on the grounds that some children may be afraid of dogs. In response to this particular issue, as a near neighbor to the Common for many years, I have never witnessed any such problems whatsoever in all my trips walking my dog to the Common. Dogs and humans have bonds going back to the dawn of time. Dogs are an integral part of our culture. Familiarity to dogs of all sizes and shapes, and basic understanding of what behaviors are appropriate around dogs should comprise a part of every child's education. Parents who may be afraid of dogs can pass that fear onto their children, in a well-meaning attempt to keep them safe. It is more productive to provide exposure and positive experiences to allay those fears. I love children as well as dogs, and both have a place, as determined by tradition, on Ross Common. Certainly dog owners must be responsible for their pets, as they most definitely have been in the years that I have been enjoying the park. At present, access to other venues is severely limited. For seniors like myself, this makes it MORE important to keep access to local, traditionally available spaces open to all to use safely.

In my case, my dog and I simply pass through the park for a very short time en route to continue our walk around the "block". If we were forced to use the outside sidewalk, it poses a safety hazard, as there is no safe space for social distancing, and too close for comfort to traffic. On the subject of banning dogs because of Covid, that simply does not make sense!

Dog owners pay BOATLOADS of property taxes. Especially in the case of a deeply entrenched tradition of shared use, they are entitled to continue use of the public amenities.

I am sure an intelligent review of the facts will support this, and some solution can be found to meet all the residents' needs. In no event should some plan be pushed through without due process.

Thank You for your consideration,
Judith Conley

I did overhear an irate parent complain about how he had to pick up dog waste; also a problem I have never witnessed. In terms of refuse on the fields, I myself have picked up bagfuls of candy and drink litter left by

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Tuesday, July 7, 2020 3:45 PM
To: Linda Lopez
Subject: FW: Rights of All Ross ResidentsI to Continued Use of Ross Commons

From: Julie Mcmillan <juliemcmillan@comcast.net>
Sent: Tuesday, July 07, 2020 3:25 PM
To: Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>
Subject: Fwd: Rights of All Ross ResidentsI to Continued Use of Ross Commons

Begin forwarded message:

From: Bruce Goldberg <bruce@seacross.net>
Subject: Rights of All Ross ResidentsI to Continued Use of Ross Commons
Date: July 7, 2020 at 3:11:19 PM PDT
To: towncouncil@townofross.org

Dear Town Council Members,

My wife, Joy and I along with our family have been Ross Residents since 1992. Both of our daughters went through K-8 at Ross School and they were raised as part of the Ross Community. Joy served on the Ross School PTA, she chaired the Bear Wear Committee, she worked on the Garden Tour for many years and chaired the Garden Tour for two years.

I served on the Ross General Plan Steering Committee in 2006 - 2007. I was a member of the Ross School Foundation for several years where I served as Vice President, President and President Emeritus. I also served for four years on the Ross School Financial Advisory Committee. In addition, we both co-chaired the Ross School Wine Auction for it's first 3 years of existence.

I mention these positions and posts not for any type of recognition other than to simply point out that we have been active, concerned and contributing members of our amazing town and community for almost three decades.

We are very strong supporters and proponents of our school. Even though our children have long since graduated, we recognize Ross School's value as the single most important cornerstone of our town.

The Ross Commons is still our touchstone. Our opportunity to reconnect with old friends and neighbors, to meet new members of the community and to stay in touch with our local affairs. We now have Norman, our 3 year old Bernedoodle and the third in the line of our Ross Dogs that we have taken almost daily (sometimes twice a day) to exercise and socialize on Ross Common.

When we read that there was a sudden ban on dogs on the Common, we were very concerned. One reason; no one that I know of was brought into any type of discussion or engagement on this decision.

Also, there was no reason given for the decision other than "to prevent Covid"

We were not certain how banning dogs from the Commons would help to prevent Covid19, but

being good community members, we assumed that this was a temporary condition based on our current tragic pandemic situation.

We have recently come to learn that the Superintendent of Ross School and Ross Rec are aggressively trying to have the Town Council make the ban permanent!!

We understand the need to re-think how we use our community's outdoor space during the school year due to the virus, but it was our understanding that there would be enough space designated for the students and the community (including the dog community) alike, and that this shared space might be utilized by each; perhaps based on non-school hours and weekends for dog lovers?

Further, I am not sure why there is even a consideration for the Ross Rec claim as the congregation of children from all over seems to be a larger potential danger to the spread of Covid within our community and Ross Rec is not an "essential service".

Part of what makes our town so remarkable and unique is our strong heritage, our history and our adherence to age old traditions.

Dogs on Ross Common are as much a part of our history as is our tradition of no mail delivery within the town.

These are all part of the many Ross Community Experiences that makes where we live special.

As I have mentioned earlier, we have been taking our dogs to Ross Common for almost 30 years.

We have found the other dog owners who frequent the Commons to be very conscientious.

We do not allow any aggressive dogs or reckless behavior. We all clean up after our dogs and we respect the town, the Commons and all of our neighbors.

This outing provides release, much needed exercise and connection to our Ross Community and is a very important part of our enjoyment of life here in the Town of Ross.

Your thoughtful consideration to take into account all of the community's needs will be very much appreciated.

Sincerely,
Bruce Goldberg

Linda Lopez

From: John Boynton <jboynton@Shorenstein.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 7, 2020 5:13 PM
To: Linda Lopez
Subject: Opposed to Resolution 2170

Hello,

I am a resident of Ross (35 Laurel Grove Ave) and I am OPPOSED to Resolution 2170 which prohibits dogs on Ross Common.

Thank you!

Sent from my iPhone

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Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Tuesday, July 7, 2020 5:12 PM
To: Linda Lopez
Subject: FW: Ross Common Dog Policy

-----Original Message-----

From: John Boynton <jboynton@Shorenstein.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 07, 2020 5:10 PM
To: CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>
Subject: Ross Common Dog Policy

Hello,

I am a resident of Ross (35 Laurel Grove Ave) and would like for dogs to be allowed on Ross Common.

Thanks,

John

Sent from my iPhone

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Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Tuesday, July 7, 2020 4:49 PM
To: Linda Lopez
Subject: FW: Rules Surrounding Dogs on Ross Common

From: Caroline Weinstein <clweinstein@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 07, 2020 4:46 PM
To: CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>; Erik Masterson <emasterson@townofross.org>; Joe Chinn - Town Manager <jchinn@townofross.org>
Cc: Drew18w <drew18w@gmail.com>
Subject: Rules Surrounding Dogs on Ross Common

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to express my concern about the new rules around dogs on Ross Common. I am a Ross resident, Ross School parent and a dog owner who frequents Ross Common. Prior to the pandemic, I brought my dog up to the Common to run around between 5pm and 6pm while my kids biked or played on the blacktop with friends. Now, I often park at the Common and take my dog on a leash for hikes in the Phoenix Lake area.

I do understand some of the changes to Ross Common usage in the time of COVID-19 and some of the changes, I applaud. I am well aware that outdoor spaces are much safer than indoor spaces to curb the spread of COVID-19 and we are truly blessed as a community to have wonderful open space right in front of our great school. As such, I fully support both Ross School and Ross Recreation using the Common in any way that is safe and makes sense for both recreation and school activities. And of course, this space must be safe and clean. Therefore, I have no problem with the prohibition of off leash dogs on Ross Common while school is in session and recreational activities (through Ross Rec) are taking place.

However, I have a hard time understanding how leashed dogs walking through the Common with owners presents a health risk. This seems both safe and appropriate, especially when school and activities are not in session. It seems to me that the groups of families, unmasked and not practicing social distancing, gathering for dinner on the Common each night present more of a COVID-19 transmission risk than leashed dogs do.

Ross Common is intended for the safe use and enjoyment of everyone. I urge you to reconsider the complete prohibition during times of COVID-19 of dogs on Ross Common and work with both Ross residents, leadership from Ross School and Ross Recreation, and members of the Town Council to come up with a suitable plan that takes into account all of the constituents involved here.

Thank you.

All the best.

Carrie Weinstein
11 Makin Grade

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Tuesday, July 7, 2020 4:49 PM
To: Linda Lopez
Subject: FW: Dog Policy / Ross Green

From: Landers, John <john.Landers@colliers.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 07, 2020 4:48 PM
To: CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>
Subject: Dog Policy / Ross Green

Hi,

My name is John Landers and live at 51 Bridge Road in Ross. I am writing to say that I am in favor of allowing owners to bring their dogs, on leash if necessary, onto Ross Green and/or the school grounds when school is not in session.

Thanks for your consideration!

John

John Q. Landers
Vice President
DRE # 01954192
Dir +1 415 288 7893
Mobile +1 415 847 7554
john.landiers@colliers.com

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July 7, 2020

Ross Town Council,

My name is Leah Knight. I moved to Kentfield from San Francisco with my family in 1975, and moved to Ross in 2006 with my husband Shawn and 2 boys. Both boys went to preschool at Ross and K-8 at Ross school (my youngest just graduated this year). I am writing to express my extreme concern and frustration at the "temporary" closing of the unofficial dog park on a small portion of the very large Ross Commons. This move to restrict dogs and their owners is unfairly and unjustly singling out a small part of the tax-paying community, taking away our rights as town members and tax payers to come to the Commons with our dogs.

It is my understanding that Michael McDowell wrote a letter to the town expressing his concerns that the kids at Ross school were frightened by the dogs, and that due to the COVID crisis, the school would need the area right outside Ross Recreation to hold outdoor classes and Ross Recreation classes. Also that should classes be held outside, he was concerned about the potential health hazards of the dog urine and excrement.

First of all, I have been coming to the Commons with my prior dogs and with my current dog since 2006. There are rarely more than 5-6 dog owners at one time. Every morning and every afternoon I would drop off my kids at school and play ball with my dog. Never in that time period did I see any frightened kids. In fact, the kids knew my dogs by name and would frequently ask if they could throw the ball for them. There may in fact be some kids who are afraid of the dogs, but that isn't a reason to just ban the dogs. (In my opinion, if a child is afraid of something, you don't just make it go away. You address the issue as a parent). We enjoyed these times at the Commons, until Michael McDowell asked dog owners not to have their dogs on the Commons during pick up and drop off. We residents graciously obliged. Dog owners came after school was in session and after school let out.

As an aside, in all my years at the Commons with my dogs, I have never seen Michael McDowell outside observing the interactions between the kids and dogs.

Secondly, as for having classes on the Ross commons. There is an inner courtyard, a stage, the large part of the Commons off-limits to dogs, the blacktop, the gym and the picnic tables. Is this not enough space? Has Michael McDowell laid out a plan for the town council as to how he would utilize the space he already has access to without taking up the small portion where we taxpayers and residents play with our dogs? If so, and it is deemed necessary to use this space, **why does it have to be all or nothing?** Why not let the dog owners come in the early morning and late afternoon? Furthermore, all the dog owners I see are very good about picking up after their dogs, and picking up after other people's dogs should they miss something. The park doesn't smell like urine, or have dog excrement all over. On the contrary, there is more trash left by the kids and recent throngs of picnickers that endanger us all with their large, non-socially distant gatherings. And for God's sake, just bring out blankets for the kids to sit on if McDowell so concerned. In all the decades people from the community have been coming to the Commons with their dogs, I know of no known health-related issues. And what happens in winter? Will the kids be having outdoor classrooms in the cold and rain?

In addition, currently Ross school isn't even in session, and Ross Recreation only has classes from 9-1:00, Monday through Friday. There is no school or Ross Recreation on the weekends, so the logic that banning dogs during these times will help prevent the spread of COVID is ludicrous. How about banning all the picnickers who are leaving trash everywhere and endangering all those who are practicing social distancing, with or without dogs?

Also, with regards to Ross Recreation. If there is so much town concern about COVID, why are they even allowing them to hold classes? I've heard the kids aren't even wearing masks. Apparently it's been said that if they're under 12 they don't need to be. But they should be if Ross Rec. is practicing proper safety. This is a risk to our community. Ross Recreation isn't a necessity in these times. It's a business. They shouldn't be allowed to operate and endanger our community solely for the sake of their personal gain.

You as the town council owe it to me and the members of our community to listen to the community and make the right decision. Why are you making your decisions based on the sole requests and desires of man who doesn't even live in Ross? Why does one man get to make the decision to take away the enjoyment of the Commons for a small group of respectful dog owners? He has chosen to go behind our backs and make this a battle, instead of working with the community to find an answer acceptable to all.

Also, with regard to bringing in Chief Masterson and his force to essentially be hall monitors. **These are trained police officers.** I have great respect for the police – my husband was an officer with Oakland for 20 years. **They have better things to do than stopping people who are walking on the paved path through the Commons with their dogs on leash.** How demeaning that you have put them in this position. It's shameful. Are the dog owners with homes that are accessed by walking on the paths around the Commons or across the Commons now relegated to second class citizens that must take a circuitous route to avoid the Commons?

We the townspeople pay taxes for the majority of school funding, and parents contribute huge amounts of money and time to the school to enable it to provide the excellent amenities and extras. Ross school is part of our town. Ross school doesn't run the town.

In closing, I hope you all will carefully consider what you're taking away from the dog owners of this town. During COVID, to be able to head over to the Commons in the late afternoon to socialize (from a proper distance) with old and new friends has been one of the things that has helped me stay sane. There can be a way to make this work for all. Please don't let the greedy wishes of one man who isn't even a resident take away something so precious to the dog owners of Ross.

Sincerely,

Leah Knight

Linda Lopez

From: Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Sent: Wednesday, July 8, 2020 1:50 PM
To: Linda Lopez
Subject: FW: Dogs on the common

-----Original Message-----

From: Lisa Gorham <leesmiles2@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 08, 2020 1:49 PM
To: CouncilAll <towncouncil@townofross.org>
Subject: Dogs on the common

This letter is a suggestion to the town regarding the banning of dogs on Ross Common. The town of Ross has always been dog friendly and dog loving. In the spirit of maintaining that my suggestion is to ask dog owners to move their "dog park" to the post office side of the street. That will allow those folks to still congregate while keeping the school side free of dogs & dog waste.

Sincerely, Lisa & Mike Gorham
18 Redwood

L I S A

Linda Lopez

From: sara fiske <sarabfiske@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 9, 2020 8:29 AM
To: Linda Lopez; Joe Chinn - Town Manager
Subject: Ross Commons Dog Policy - Resolution 2170

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Sara Milani. I live behind the Ross School on Allen Avenue. Whilst walking my dog last week, I was *extremely* disappointed and dismayed to see the new signs prohibiting dogs — both leashed and unleashed — on the commons and on the footpaths that bisect the commons.

Our family is on the Ross Commons every single day - both with and without our 4 year old golden retriever. Suffice to say, I was appalled to learn we could no longer walk our dog on the footpath around the commons or from our house to the Post Office without the risk of being cited! I realize we are living in unusual times but I was curious as to the impetus behind these drastic measures.

According to the Town Meeting Minutes of June 18, Ross School and Ross Recreation would like to use the part of the commons we know as the "dog park," in addition to the playing fields and hardscape, for outdoor socially distanced classrooms. As a member of the community and, until recently, a parent at Ross School, I *completely agree* that our priority is to educate our children in a safe environment. What I do not understand is why these measures are being enforced now, during the summer months, when when classes are *not* in session. Additionally, why include prohibiting *leashed dogs* on footpaths? This seems completely irrational.

I assure you, I am not the only person who walks my dog on a leash around the commons, early morning or in the evenings. In fact, I see several Ross residents (many much older than me) each day who live on the streets adjacent to the commons. It is their routine to take their dogs out, get a bit of exercise and catch up with their neighbors. For many it is physically impossible to take their dogs to the trails. The commons is an integral part of their daily routine.

If COVID and the issue of health and safety (and socially distancing within the dog park) is the issue, why are there no restrictions for the multi-family picnics and gatherings that regularly take place on the commons? I enjoy seeing the commons utilized during these unprecedented times but I assure you, many of the picnickers, who travel by automobile from outside Ross, are not from the same family, rarely masked, and they are not socially distancing. Additionally, many bring their own dogs and leave more waste and rubbish strewn across the lawns than the dog owners from within our community.

If COVID is not the issue, and it truly is that the Ross School and Ross Recreation would like to use the space without the dog "problem," might it be plausible for a different solution to be made that can fulfill the school and Ross Rec's want for a safer environment whilst also allowing for a community space for dog owners? One possible solution could be to prohibit dogs on the green areas between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:00 pm and cite people who do not clean up after their dogs? (Truthfully, most of the dog owners I know police each other when it comes to waste.) There must be some compromise.

It would be a complete shame to have our "dog community" displaced without a discussion. Before this ban, I felt as if the people who live within the Ross community were able to successfully social distance at the "dog park" and the larger problem was the people coming in from other communities. In my opinion, this ban is unfair. I would greatly appreciate some discussion toward a mutually agreeable compromise. As a member of the Ross community, I would like to enjoy the space for which we pay taxes.

Please, I urge you to revisit this policy.

Many thanks
Sara Milani

Sent from my iPad

Dear Mayor McMillan and Council Members Brekhus, Kircher, Kuhl and Robbins:

Ross Common, as its name implies, is for use by all. This extraordinary time of Covid-19 calls for us to come together, but your “temporary” closure of the dog park divides and excludes.

If we are truly in this pandemic together, then why can't the Council choose to be inclusive and amend its decision to allow time-sharing of this valuable resource? At 5 pm this Tuesday (07/07) the whole common was empty, which is a significant under-utilization.

My son (Ross School '08) fondly recalls playing in the grove both during Ross Rec and Ross School. My wife and I did not give two thoughts about him playing in the grove and suspect the other parents felt the same.

Benefits of the Dog Park

I have lived in Ross for over 35 years. During the last 13, I have taken Ajax and now Vasco to the dog park twice a day. To me and many other residents, it is a treasured asset and one of the desirable features that separates Ross from many of its neighbors. Let me share some insights:

1. The dog park is one of the most heavily used town facilities, morning and afternoon every day.
2. A very safe area, it is highly visible by frequent drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians. It is so safe that mothers are not afraid to have their young children walk the family dog there alone.
3. Residents who are time- or physically-challenged can exercise their dogs quickly and efficiently by throwing balls or letting them run and play with other dogs. Adjacent street parking enhances the safety and use of this park.
4. A social hub for all ages, in my experience as many as four generations of residents and their pets might use the park at one time.
5. In contrast to the sunny and bark-covered parks in San Anselmo and Larkspur, the grove's shade is inviting and comfortable, especially in warm months.

Growing Need for the Dog Park

The need for a dog park in town has grown substantially during the lockdown as many families have adopted pandemic puppies. These puppies need a place to socialize and run.

No Good Alternatives

There are no good alternatives to the existing dog park: (a) The area adjacent to the post office is too small, too close to the street for safety, and provides no shade or seating. (b) Frederick Allen Park's hidden location would be viewed by many women and children to be unsafe, off-leash dogs would be incompatible with the area's frequent use by Kentfield Hospital's patients with walkers or in wheelchairs, and such use would be incompatible with the proposed natural vegetation plans by Flood Control.

Time Sharing to Improve Utilization and Safety

During this pandemic I would suggest the Council consider the following:

1. Banning all dogs from the Common from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm when Ross School and Ross Rec are open.
2. Allowing dogs in the grove after 4:00 pm and sunrise-sunset on the weekends and holidays.

Summary

The Council's decision to "temporary" close the dog park has created substantial division amongst the residents. The Covid-19 crisis will continue to create much havoc to our community. During such a crisis it is to be expected potential missteps will be made. So, leadership needs to be flexible, listen to the constituents' concerns and adjust/change course as needed to keep a large number of the residents on board with its policies.

I hope my time-sharing proposal will be given appropriate consideration as a means of healing deep division in our community so we can focus on more critical issues during this very difficult time.

Best,

Craig McCarty